

News Release
U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
District of Rhode Island



January 17, 2007

Two plead guilty to firearms offenses

Antonio Neri, of East Providence, and **Hommy Acevedo**, of Providence, have pleaded guilty to related firearms offenses – Neri to being a felon in possession of a firearm, and Acevedo to illegally buying firearms for Neri.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the guilty pleas, which the defendants entered during separate hearings before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Mary M. Lisi in U.S. District Court, Providence. Neri pleaded guilty yesterday, and Acevedo today.

At Neri's plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha said that the government could prove that Neri tossed a gun away in a Providence Park last June, after firing it several times. Police were drawn to a park at Ascham and McMillen Streets by reports that shots had been fired. They saw a large crowd running out of the park and saw Neri toss away an object. They apprehended Neri and recovered the object – a nine millimeter pistol. Detectives later developed a latent fingerprint on the pistol that linked it to Neri. He admitted having the gun and said he hadn't fired at anybody, but had fired into the air to hear what it sounded like.

Neri, 27, has a prior felony conviction for a 1997 drive-by-shooting in which fired a gun from a car, wounding a man.

Additional investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) into last year's incident led to Acevedo, who had purchased the nine-millimeter pistol. At Acevedo's plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Neronha said the government could prove that

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Acevedo bought that gun and two others in June, serving as a straw-buyer for Neri, who couldn't legally buy the guns himself. On each occasion, Acevedo stated that he was the actual buyer of the gun. On each occasion, however, Neri picked out the firearm and gave Acevedo the money to buy it.

Neri is detained pending sentencing, which is scheduled for April 6. The maximum penalty for being a felon in possession of a firearm is ten years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. Acevedo's sentencing is scheduled for April 13. He pleaded guilty to making a false statement in connection with the purchase of a firearm. The maximum penalty for that offense is also ten years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Providence Police and ATF investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Neronha prosecuted it as part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes. Under Project Safe Neighborhoods, the U.S. Attorney's Office, working with Providence Police, ATF, the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office, and other agencies, aggressively prosecutes federal firearms offenses in an effort to incarcerate those responsible for gun violence and deter others from committing gun crimes. Since 2001, gun offenders have been sentenced to a total of more than 750 years in federal prison.

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